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Survive and Thrive: Transforming Care for Every Small and Sick Newborn

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According to a recent study by a global coalition that includes **UNICEF and WHO**, the world will not achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 3 (to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages)** unless it transforms care for every newborn.

According to UNICEF, India witnesses **25.4 newborn deaths per 1,000 births** and **0.64 million newborn deaths annually**. The Sustainable Development Goal for neonatal deaths requires all countries **to bring down the figure to 12 deaths or less per 1,000 births by 2030**.

Key Findings

- An estimated **30 million newborns** require specialised care in hospital every year without which many either die or develop preventable health conditions and disabilities that affect them for life.
- Newborns who are born too soon or too small, or who become sick, are at the greatest risk of death and disability.
- The challenges facing small and sick newborns and their families include **scarce services, barriers to care-seeking (such as a lack of awareness, transportation or finances) and discrimination**.
- Additionally, the **financial and psychological toll** on their families can have detrimental effects on their cognitive, linguistic and emotional development.
- **Universal access to quality care** could prevent 1.7 million neonatal deaths, or 68% of the deaths that will otherwise occur in 2030.
- As many as 2.9 million women, stillbirths and newborns can be saved during 2030 in 81 high-burden countries if there are interventions for both mother and newborn at the same time, at the same place, by the same healthcare provider.

Recommendations

- Providing **round-the-clock inpatient care** for newborns seven days a week.
- **Training nurses** to provide hands-on care working in partnership with families.
- A **family-centred approach** that strengthens parents' skills and competence in caring for their small, sick or high-risk infant reduces stress and anxiety, and benefits the newborn's weight gain and neurodevelopmental progress.
- Providing good quality of care should be a part of country policies, and a lifelong investment for those who are born small or sick.
- For continuous quality improvement, countries not only **need to collect data** about small and sick newborns but also to **monitor the data systematically, evaluate it rigorously**, and – while guaranteeing confidentiality and data security – share it with relevant partners. Only then can decision-makers guide investments and drive action for better newborn survival and development outcomes.
- Low and middle income countries will be able to avert two out of every three neonatal deaths by 2030 if they increase their **investment by \$0.20 per capita**.

Way Forward

The report maps out a **pathway towards 2030**. To transform all aspects of newborn care, from its availability and quality to its uptake and affordability **requires all stakeholders** – governments and partners, competent health-care professionals, professional associations, private sector organizations, researchers, empowered parents, and engaged communities – **to work together**.